

The Rise of a New Anti-Feminism: Spokeswomen of the Alt-Right and their Appeals to Women

Research Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation  
with research distinction in Women's, Gender, Sexuality Studies\* in the undergraduate colleges  
of The Ohio State University

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The Ohio State University May 2019

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## **Introduction**

Literature dating back to the 1970s and through to the early 2000s details the work of scholars who study women in extreme right-wing movements such as the Klu Klux Klan (KKK), Concerned Women for America (CWA), and the “Right” following the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment. I focus on the scholarship of Kathleen Blee, Ronnee Schreiber, and Andrea Dworkin and determine how appeals were made to conservative women to join extreme right-wing movements. Blee, Schreiber, and Dworkin sift through narratives and assumptions, and analyze specific appeals that promise particular benefits to women. *Right-Wing Women* (1983) by Andrea Dworkin investigates why women are drawn to movements on the far Right and describes in detail how the Right’s perspective on subjects such as abortion, homosexuality, female poverty, and anti-Semitism, actually engage female members. Written in 1983, Dworkin was thinking about the “New Right”, as a social and political system. She focuses on their successful acquisition of female members who were determined to work together to prove their oppression was false, that feminism was their real oppression, and how Christian fundamentalist values should be at the core of society (Dworkin 1983). Dworkin shows contradictory messages as a part of extreme right-wing appeals to women. For example, she focuses on anti-feminism to show how the movement’s success was nurtured by women participants to a certain degree, while also claiming that complete male control manipulates conservative women. The patriarchy creates this control through an anti-feminist lens that information passes and communicates to the public. Thus, Dworkin holds that religion, romantic love, fear, a sexual hierarchy, and the aversion to and separation from the “other” sustains a right-wing worldview as rational, despite any flaws in analysis (Dworkin 1983). The emphasis on women’s bodies and behaviors as

controlled successfully via “a simple, fixed, predetermined social, biological, and sexual order” is central to Dworkin’s scholarship (Dworkin 1983, 22).

In *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (1991) Kathleen Blee details and outlines the experiences of women in the Women of the Klu Klux Klan, a group derived from the Klu Klux Klan. She worked to create a rapport with former members or sympathizers to the WKKK, specifically, women from midwestern states, such as Ohio and Indiana. Blee focuses on Indiana for two reasons; she grew up there and was familiar with its history and she was aware of the “racial” uniformity of the state. Her book uses personal narrative and story recollection by WKKK members to uncover their perspectives of the group and its positionality in society. For example, she identifies how socialization and friendship amongst women were the main motivations for joining, in combination with the preservation of privileges and traditions (Blee 1991, 17; 101). Furthermore, from Blee’s neutral stance as a correspondent with her interviewees she successfully gained information that told readers how normalized WKKK membership was, how persuasive members were in recruitment, and highlights the importance of studying the histories of gender in social movements, specifically the participation and influence of women.

Blee’s second book, *Inside Organized Racism: Women and Men in the Hate Movement*, published in 2002, takes a slightly different approach to questioning gender in social movements. Blee focuses on the “diversity” inside racist movements, though not through racial diversity; she focuses on the differences between the social histories of the members and their individual goals. For example, many members are drawn to racist movements because of personal or familial ties, but some are focused on asserting a “racial morality” by joining and taking responsibility for the “race” (Blee 1991, 66). Blee investigates, “undercover”, with a method of interview and close observation to find out more about the impact of women in extreme racist movements, and even

approaches the question of their leadership and power. *Inside Organized Racism* emphasizes that by not studying women in these movements, researchers leave out crucial insights into the operations of racist groups. More specifically, the book highlights how mothers extended a maternal strength from her children to “the entire white ‘race’” (Blee 1991, 119).

Ronnee Schreiber’s book *Righting Feminism: Conservative Women and American Politics* was published in 2008. Schreiber analyzes how the conservative culture that rose during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan during the 1980s influenced racist organizations. She looks closely at figures such as Evangelical Beverley LaHaye to ascertain a relationship between religion and religious ideology and the mobilization of people into racist groups and movements. In investigating the women of the conservative movement, Schreiber shifts the lens to unearth how anti-feminism is a tool for promoting their traditional “race”, or their views and beliefs on women’s rights. Using groups such as the Concerned Women for America (CWA) and the International Women’s Forum (IWF), Schreiber highlights how conservative and religious groups position themselves as alternatives for women who do not want to subscribe to a “feminist” or “progressive” movement (Schreiber 2008, 44).

For this paper I first began by reading and analyzing the above foundational texts. After reviewing the literature, I established categories to filter the scholarship, in order to understand what appeals right-wing women were seeing as legitimate. I revised these categories to focus on the appeal to the *white race* and the appeal to gender specific benefits of membership, and identification with white supremacist groups. Functions of *white race* movements include, a focus on pro-natalism, to tradition, to ethnocentrism, and to an aesthetic of whiteness. I focus primarily on scholarship from Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber to understand appeals to the overall “race” that are created through an anti-feminist lens and pro-Alt-Right lens. Elements of gender

specific appeals include: sexual complementarity, a focus on religious regulation, socialization, and the appeal to an aesthetic of whiteness. I identify these appeals in the older texts through each author's individual perspectives and methodologies on women's participation in extreme right-wing movements. Next, I identify the gender specific elements that are present in each case study. I selected three influential Alt-Right women leaders and used their identities, images, speeches and videos as artifacts for understanding the appeals they make, such as sexual complementarity and an aesthetic of whiteness. I conclude from my analysis that the *white race* superiority belief system continues to construct women as domestic figures and encourages and exhorts them to identify in this role. Additionally, I note that the appeals for women to join or remain in this positionality are masked as "empowering" conservative women, and this is accomplished by emphasizing and encouraging anti-feminism.

### **General Appeals to the White "Race"**

General appeals to the "race" promise benefits to potential female members of extreme-right wing movements. Kathleen Blee defines white supremacist movements as "teaching a complex and contradictory mix of hatred for enemies, belief in conspiracies, and allegiance to an imaginary unified race of 'Aryans' (Blee 2003, 3). The long-term goal of protection and the advancement of the "race" historically includes specific elements such as subscription to pro-natalism, tradition, protection of the ingroup against outgroups, and a focus on an aesthetic of whiteness. Pro-natalism is childbearing as a woman's social role and social responsibility for her own sake, for that of the spouse, for the parents, the spouse's parents, or for the existing children (McLeod & Ponesse 2009, 135). Extreme right-wing movements focus on motherhood and the preservation of children. Kathleen Blee describes Klu Klux Klan mothers as the "only reliable source of counsel, sympathy, and courage in a man's life" (Blee 1991, 46). Blee portrays the

image of a mother in a racist movement as an honored role and figure, and argues that its importance paved way for motherhood to be seen as political. This woman and mother protective framework show women that their “natural” job is to sustain the existence of the *white race* through giving birth to future members and (male) leaders. Ronnee Schreiber demonstrates that in the conservative women’s movement, mothers shift into conversation about *guardianship*, of not only the physical child but, more importantly, racial purity (Schreiber 2008, 20).

Guardianship centers around women’s bodies and their natural capabilities, therefore there is a necessity for the “farming model” or maternal labor to be framed as a distinguished role and a personal and community responsibility (Dworkin 1983, 175).

The assurance that the white “race” of extreme right-wing groups will not be overrun by “alien” infiltration, physically or ideologically, is based on preservation of a white ingroup. Kathleen Blee writes, “Klanswomen embraced the KKK’s racist, anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic agenda, and symbols of American womanhood (white Protestantism) (Blee 1992, 35). An “alien” is any individual person or collective movement that does not embody the above description, or who is in active opposition to *white race* beliefs. The “Race” I am referring to centers around “whiteness” as necessary. However, it is a particular kind of whiteness that leans towards excluding Judaism, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBT+ communities, and more identities that discourage “whiteness”. Instead, the “race” tends to favor able-bodied, heterosexual, European, Christian communities that encourage “whiteness”. Through an appeal to the community or “Race” that relies on the fear of ingroup extinction by outgroup efforts, potential members are assured that their history will not be dissolved. Kathleen Blee points out that, “the home represented Americanism and the protection of American values from Alien influence” (Blee 1991, 46). Blee focuses specifically on what is at the heart of extreme right-

wing movements, the view of the nuclear family: a heterosexual married couple who abide by traditional gender roles and place the woman in the home and for the children. Blee observes that male Klu Klux Klan members felt summoned to protect threatened white womanhood and white female purity because of their economic, emotional, and social fear tactics that forced women to be totally committed to their family and “race” for protection (Blee 1991, 11). The necessity for a white woman’s individual protection by a white man is also the necessity for the group’s image of a white woman to be protected by white men. In safeguarding white women’s purity, it is the figure of man who enforces traditional gender roles, remains all powerful in matters of choice, and enforces the submission of the figure of woman; this keeps the movement intact. This appeal to protection expresses that women should live with security and without fear and these advantages can only be attained through membership in the *white race*.

Extreme right-wing movements put an emphasis on an “aesthetics of whiteness”. I speculate that this mean that the gender expression and gender identity that members occupy, and present are based on a “racial” hierarchy. This hierarchy places white physical beauty at the very top, and continues down underlining culture, religion, tradition, physical strength, etc.; with each feature contributing to the overall aesthetic that is meant to be embodied. In this context, a woman’s image is a poster figure for extreme right-wing women. Their presentation is specific to women who manifest white beauty, and the symmetry of their “race” through their appearance and cultural conduct. This ideation gives women something to strive for, something to personify, identify, and personalize. Furthermore, Blee observes that, as a means to sustain their image of consistency and coherence, Klanswomen would take their efforts into the public arena. By “cleansing public schools” Klanswomen attempted to remove “corrupting” influences of non-protestant figures and ideology (Blee 1991, 145). Women in extreme right-wing movements

know themselves to be mothers; thus, taking their insight and intuition into the schools with their children is an effective way to gain purpose and to do the work of the movement and for the movement, while remaining in correct gender-hierarchical order.

Extreme right-wing movements' devotion and allegiance to a Christian God serve as the symbol for a classic religion, a model for success, and a potentially unrivaled faith. The appeal to women is in the exclusivity of their tradition that cannot be weakened by "alien" countries with their own beliefs. For women in extreme right-wing movements, to participate in the continuation of this tradition, Blee observes that they assert a "racial morality" that is based on "faith in God and commitment to mainstream religion" (Blee 2002, 70). This showcases the importance of safeguarding "religion" and its ideologies and the preservation of traditions that are specific to the *white race*. Ronnee Schreiber references Betty Friedan and Beverley LaHaye in a match for representation of a "true woman". Schreiber quotes LaHaye as saying she knew that feminists' "anti-god, anti-family rhetoric did not represent her beliefs or those of the vast majority of women" (Schreiber 2008, 30). Due to LaHaye's status in the 1970s with Evangelical religion and conservative women's rights, her words were important in establishing extreme right-wing movements' values. That is, espousing an explicit anti-feminist discourse influenced perceptions for women about how they should be acting in their static role as a domestic figure. Protection of this static figure and the figure of family is deeply rooted in the culture of racist organizations and in their religious thought. For a Christian fundamentalist ideology to be sustainable it must rely on upholding certain values and artifacts; this belief can only function through the adherences of women to their assigned roles. To view this as an appeal to women, Andrea Dworkin puts it plainly, "The Right offers women a simple, fixed, predetermined social, biological, and sexual order" (Dworkin 1983, 22).



Throughout history women often have been left out of the discussion. To analyze the scholarship of Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber is important because there has been such minimal investigation into the impact that women in extreme right-wing movements have. Although many conservative women are not leaders of these organizations, they have an important role and an area of influence. Generally, people do not think about women in *white race* movements because they are male dominant groups and organizations. However, to assume that extreme right-wing women have little to no significance on operation and everyday life would be unwise. In the section to follow, I analyze how Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber emphasize women in extreme right-wing movements through appeals to the *white race*, sisterhood, sexual complementarity, and religious protection.

### **Gender Specific Appeals**

It is clear throughout history that woman have been central to extreme right-wing movements, for membership and numbers, as tools of recruitment and education, and to create and preserve white supremacist families and households. Blee, Schreiber, and Dworkin have all documented appeals that apply to women individually and less to members' identification with the *white race* as a whole. The most recurring pattern came from personal interviews conducted by Kathleen Blee. Specifically, these were interviews with former or current extreme Alt-Right women from varying classes and incomes, generational beliefs and customs, and geographic locations (urban/rural). However, what remains the same is the appeal to female socialization and comradery. Blee takes away from a one-on-one interview that her interviewee remembered, "with pride, not regret", that membership into the Klan was "a way to get together and enjoy" (Blee 1991, 1). In fact, in her book *Women of the Klan*, Blee concludes that these women focus on their time in extreme-right wing movements as a point of solidarity amongst like-minded

women, rather than seeing the Klu Klux Klan as a group and time of one of “U.S. history’s most vicious campaigns of prejudice and hatred” (Blee 1991, 1). In turning a blind eye to the violent ramifications of the advancement of extreme right-wing movements, such as the KKK, female members and acquaintances focus on their own personal advancements. Extreme-right wing women desire a connection among women of their “race,” especially in the face of extreme right-wing ideologies that call for the submission of women to men and the dedication of the female mind to a purpose of solely domestic success. Blee wraps this up when she writes that the “collective struggle” amongst women in extreme right-wing movements is a tool to “counter the feelings of resignation and despair they experience as individuals” (Blee 1991, 70). Therefore, socialization is a tool of community organizing and trust among female members. Perhaps women use this system in order to successfully live in the mindset of a right-wing woman in the face of opposition or, more importantly, to find comfort in community and a sense of contribution to an important mission.

Schreiber and Dworkin draw attention to the appeals to the sexual complementarity, as a form of empowerment for individual women in extreme right-wing movements. In their scholarship they pay close attention to motherhood, body autonomy in women, and abortion. Schreiber writes that in order for a woman to find or realize her personal maternal interests and instincts, she must denounce her career (Schreiber 2008, 84). The suggested shift in perspective encourages a woman to leave her income, in exchange for gaining full control over her children and the economic, physical, and emotional protection of her husband. Dworkin continues this line of thinking on individuality and empowerment. She focuses on the “sexual degradation of women” as the driving force behind the movement to ban abortion (Dworkin 1983, 46). For an extreme right-wing woman to have an abortion indicates she is linked to forbidden sexual

behavior, a loss of her self-respect, and a loss of control in her domestic life. Therefore, abortion and a woman who has an abortion could not exist in the *white race* unless she repents, expresses remorse, and commits to never repeating this act. Schreiber points to the specific language of the conservative women's group, "Concerned Women for America" (or CWA) that says: "abortions' second victims" are women (Schreiber 2008, 98). Placing abortion in a framework that seems dangerous for *women* and painting them as victims allows conservative women to assert their superiority and separate themselves from the "other" women who view abortion as acceptable. In doing so, extreme right-wing women use their collective voice for their own *perceived* support. What's more, the men of their movement support them and their activism, as it is a part of the group's social and cultural advancement that abortion is seen as harmful.

It is clear that as an appeal, acceptance and "empowerment" are key to female membership and recruitment. Inside that structure also lies a desired approval and embrace from Jesus Christ. Dworkin, Blee, and Schreiber are all aware of the influence of religion in extreme right-wing movements (especially as an artifact and model of morals, ideology, institutions and system). Therefore, to respect a Christian God, for example, the WKKK (Protestant) and CWA (Conservative Evangelical) requires another form of protection for women. Dworkin points to what extreme right-wing movements offer women in the images and teachings of Jesus: "the one male to whom one can submit absolutely – be woman as it were – without being sexually violated or physiologically abused" (Dworkin 1983, 23). Her conclusion is important because she sees Jesus as a shelter for women, a reassurance for their feelings, and a love that is not based on sexual expectations. The appeal is to an individual woman and her relationship to Jesus as a way to strengthen *her* being, not necessarily the group. However, when a woman feels

secure in her place, the group is bound to develop and advance with her support and participation.

### **Case Studies:**

In my analysis and research of women in the Alt-Right, three names dominated: Lana Lokteff, Brittany Pettibone, and Lauren Southern. I selected these women because of their status as Alt-Right spokeswomen. Their names are mentioned in articles from sources such as NPR, BBC, Fox News, CNN, and each has her own Wikipedia page. In my web-search, I came across many of their speeches and videos. Each one is crafted in a specific way to set up their persuasive narratives on women and appeals to induct women into extreme right-wing movements. Their modes of appeal appear in story-telling or advice-based anecdotes, which are typically seen in “digital feminism”. Digital feminism provides a source of discursive and collective energy that catalyzes both on and offline movement (Jackson, Bailey, Welles 2019, 14). Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern use what I describe as “digital conservatism”, adapting storytelling as a “larger cultural intervention”, especially in *response* to feminist or liberal ideology (Jackson, Bailey, Welles 2019, 13).

I transcribed each speech and video to engage completely with their word choice and analyze their arguments and the images that accompany their speech. As separate case studies, Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern use different audiences to disseminate their appeals -- for example, college campuses, fellow conservatives or Alt-Right members, and female YouTube viewers. However, what remains constant among them is their credibility as female spokeswomen of the conservative Alt-Right. I define credibility using Source Credibility Theory. Source Credibility Theory refers to the viewer perception of the information-source based on

attractiveness, trustworthiness and knowledge in the area of the “endorsed product” (Ohanian, 1990; Djafarova & Rushworth 2017). In this case, the endorsed product that Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern are selling is the *white race* lifestyle and ideology. To apply credibility to each woman, I looked at their subscriber count and viewership numbers on their YouTube videos and speeches; the higher these numbers are the more credibility Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern are gaining. Once establishing their credibility, I analyzed their messages through a framework of legitimacy and authority.

I use five total speeches or videos produced by Lana Lokteff, Brittany Pettibone, and Lauren Southern. I analyze two forms of appeal to show how certain features from my original and foundational texts on women in extreme right-wing movements compare or contrast. For example, I focus on the appeal of a white aesthetic and appeals to the sexual complementarity that are expected specific benefits to women. Lana Lokteff, Brittany Pettibone, and Lauren Southern are all female far-right political activists, internet celebrities on YouTube, and are described as “Alt-Right”. They are the vehicles through which recruitment for extreme Alt-Right organizations take place and provide images for women to learn from. I analyze their contribution to digital conservatism, their status on YouTube, and their individual styles of teaching their values. Through their work, I suggest they appeal to women through arguments for sexual complementarity and *white race* aesthetics.

### **Lana Lokteff**

Lana Lokteff is a Russian-American from Oregon who co-runs Red Ice, an Alt-Right media company, with her Swedish husband, Henrik Palmgren (RedIceTv.com, 2019). According to Red Ice’s website, Lokteff’s bio reads, “She is passionate about European identity politics, ancestral traditions, and health” (RedIceTv.com, 2019). Additionally, her image is often seen on

YouTube, on the Red Ice channel, and the 3fourteen podcast. As mentioned previously, extreme right-wing women have a desire for community and purpose. Lokteff advocates for, teaches, and persuades her audience of her credibility, or her believability, as the face of women in extreme right-wing groups. Once this authenticity is established, Lokteff influences and motivates women who hear her messages to join *white race* movements. However, her methodology is not entirely unique. Schreiber (2008) uses Beverley LaHaye as the face of the evangelical conservative women's movement and employs similar attributes such as promoting marriage and motherhood and protecting women's domestic status. However, a significant change from the late 1970s to 2019 is that Lokteff is able to reach much broader audiences through the digital medium of video and YouTube.

YouTube was created in 2005 and has transformed social media and video sharing. Currently, through advertisement placement content creators on YouTube, such as Lokteff and Red Ice TV, will receive money for their content uploads based on their subscribers and views and abiding by individual advertisers' policies to receive a payout (YouTube, 2019). Therefore, digital media has completely changed how organizations, movements, and ideology can spread and reproduce. To give evidence to the ways in which Lokteff creates and identifies appeals to individual women in conservative movements, I focus on two of her videos uploaded to Red Ice TV's YouTube channel. Red Ice TV has just over 305,000 subscribers and over 1,800 videos (Red Ice TV, 2019). In October 2018 Red Ice TV uploaded a YouTube video titled, "What A Woman in Her 20's Should Know," with Lana Lokteff as the face of the content. Her name and image attached to a video about women in their 20s reinforces Lokteff as the representation of Alt-Right values and rhetorical appeals. In what follows, I analyze Lokteff's implementation of sexual complementarity and a *white race* aesthetic as appeals to individual women.

In “What A Woman in Her 20’s Should Know,” Lokteff pairs images with her statements. The specific section of video I analyze first focuses on auditory and visual appeals set up by Lokteff from what I identify as an appeal to the sexual complementarity -- for example, the appeal to individual women’s self-goals and determination. Interestingly enough, Lokteff goes about this by setting up the man, the husband, as the vehicle through which wives and conservative women will feel empowered. She says, “When a woman meets the right man it makes her more secure, it calms her, it provides her protection, and stability; then, instead of all our time being an airy-fairy, wooing a man, she can work on improving herself. And the best way to improve yourself is with a family” (Red Ice TV, 2018).

Lokteff’s claims and suggestions focus on pronouns. The set-up of “her” after each perceived benefit of a husband, comes across as direct communication to the individual female viewer. Lokteff encourages early marriage because then women can *really* focus on themselves as their stories have already conquered the “marriage plot” or the narrative structure that focuses on young women gaining entrance into society through marriage, that is synonymous with the plot itself. The messages inside a 1-2-minute span are set up purposefully with a clip from clips.com of a man and a woman embracing. Physically the male character is standing above the woman, looking down on her as she looks up at him (clips.com / Red Ice TV, 2018). This clip, along with notes by Lokteff about protection, encouragement, and empowerment appeal to women because Lokteff shows a picture of true heterosexual gender-binary-adhering love. More specifically, Lokteff creates an appeal that adheres to the ideas of a sexual complementarity that show women as empowered through the traditional nuclear family.

Finally, Lokteff’s closing message of improvement via a family is closely tied to the “natural” purpose of women to make babies. As previously mentioned, pro-natalism is a function

of *white race* ideology, however the incentive for the individual woman is that she is a part of something, and she has a career that is accepted and honored by her community. If a conservative woman recognizes that this message comes from Lokteff, she can feel as though her work is legitimized and that she is working alongside other women of her status. Identifying with Lokteff based on the ethos of her narration is a successful performance of digital conservatism.

Another portion of this video that represents Lokteff's wide-range of persuasive rhetoric comes about two-minutes after the previous portion of the video. Lokteff continues her appeal to sexual complementarity, especially through the empowerment and encouragement of conservative women. Lokteff's communicative style appears as teacher to student, or mother to child, giving advice on how to make the *right* choices for the future. For example, she says "You break it (cycle of choosing the wrong partner) by being conscious and by controlling your emotions and sex drive... True love is steady, not a roller coaster" (Red Ice TV, 2018).

Lokteff's advice-style approach in communicating with her audience is similar to the conduct books of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that told women how to behave, how to find a husband, and thus be closer to fulfilling her purpose in life as a domestic being. For example, Dr. John Gregory's, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774). What both the 1774 conduct book and Lokteff's 2019 YouTube videos do, is positively invoke The Cult of Domesticity or the Cult of True Womanhood. The Cult of True Womanhood is defined by Barbara Welter in her 1966 journal article, *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860* (1966), as, "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues--piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister,



wife-woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them, she was promised happiness and power” (Welter 1966; 152).

Welter’s definition is essential to include when analyzing the tropes and messages of the *white race*. However, Lokteff rejects the conduct-book literature and Cult of True Womanhood, when she points out that control is better than letting a woman’s emotions get the best of her. In context, this may mean that, instead of aligning with the ideals of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century woman, for example, by asking women to use their tears and emotions to persuade the husband, Lokteff believes women should control their feelings as a way to have a more “successful” relationship.

Another medium through which Lokteff employs her teaching and message communication is speeches. Specifically, I use a video and transcription of her speech from February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at an event for the Identarian Ideas in Stockholm, Sweden, that was uploaded to the Red Ice TV YouTube channel. This speech was given to a primarily white male crowd and is about 15 minutes in length with a little over 86,000 views and 1,000 comments. Lokteff uses the appeal to the sexual complementarity to promote *white race* ideology and to empower women inside of extreme right-wing groups. She points to women who have voices in the community or in the media as having a “man that supports them emotionally” (Red Ice TV, 2017). Lokteff creates a narrative that says if women want a voice in the movement, they need to rely on the support and guidance of their husband. As an appeal, this encourages women because it relieves the pressure of speaking and thinking alone. As Andrea Dworkin makes clear, the right offers a fixed system and structure, that appears inspiring to women and reassures them to continue on the path of right-wing, conservative success.

Lokteff appeals to the individual conservative woman through socialization, just as Dworkin, Schreiber, and Blee identified earlier in their scholarship on women in extreme right-wing movements. Lokteff creates this dynamic by encouraging the sexual complementarity between men and women. She suggests that, “It (the Alt-Right) created an arena where like-minded girls can meet and vent and say what they wanted without fear of criticism” (Red Ice TV, 2017). The set-up of the sexual complementarity demonstrates the benefits of enforcing a gender binary, which makes space for women to talk to each other when, say, their husbands are at work and they are at home. Sexual complimentary as a tool of appeal allows for socialization to be a function for the individual woman to make a community out of the *white race*. Additionally, the idea of “like minded girls” is important to note, because this female-centric arena is an echo-chamber or a community that reinforces their current political or social views (Lime et al 2018). This is an appeal for conservative women because they then form their own group inside of a much larger *white race*.

Whether it be peer-to-peer education or YouTube content creator to YouTube viewer, Lokteff works to employ the sexual complementarity as an official appeal to conservative women. An additional tactic of appeal that Lokteff uses is the *white race* aesthetic. From the history and scholarship of Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber, it is clear that this appeal was made in the image of religious piety, attention to domesticity, whiteness, purity, beauty etc. in white women. However, in this context, Lokteff uses the attributes of a *white race* aesthetic to focus on the physical as well as the overall movement’s attractiveness and health. In her 2017 Identarian Ideas speech, Lokteff says that “nothing motivates a man like a beautiful woman in need” (Red Ice TV, 2017). Her language is important to analyze because she encourages women to focus on their outward appearance, to make it beautiful, so that the husband can fulfill his role in the home

and public sphere. In fact, Lokteff goes on to say, “a soft woman saying hard things can create repercussions through society” (Red Ice TV/ YouTube). Lokteff’s subtle threat to the destruction of the *white race* through the actions of an indolent wife, can be seen as an appeal to women to know that they have influence over the actions of their husbands. Empowerment in conservative women is empowerment for the entire *white race* and movement.

In her Red Ice TV video, Lokteff says to women in their twenties, “limit the sun exposure, and cut out all the products... replace them with natural alternatives” (Red Ice TV, 2017). Her suggestions relate directly back to the appeal to a *white race* aesthetic. In context, this may mean that to avoid the sun suggests that a woman will keep her fair skin and reject fine lines and wrinkles, thus holding on to her youth and beauty. Furthermore, encouraging natural alternatives as ways of taking care of health targets women who understand the benefits of, say, a vegetarian diet. Lokteff places emphasis on natural health diets when she discourages body-positivity, a traditionally feminist term and movement: “As a young woman or a woman of any age, but especially as a woman in her 20s, you should have a nice body, you should be in shape, you’re still young and everything is perky, if not, something’s wrong, better yourself, don’t settle for a frumpy figure” (Red Ice TV, 2017). This quotation is a direct performance of digital anti-feminism, that uses her storytelling and advice-giving structure to denounce “mainstream” progressive ideas of body-positivity. As Lokteff performs digital anti-feminism, she is thus performing digital conservatism, as she offers up an image of an alternative lifestyle. In fact, Lokteff incites slight panic when she says that if a woman’s body is not perky, something is wrong. However, by placing body-anxiety language in the terms of digital conservatism, I suggest that Lokteff can show how the *white race* allows women to feel empowered through healthy eating and lifestyle choices that would otherwise not have been encouraged in a feminist

movement. The creation of an image of an aesthetic of whiteness signifies a total shift in culture, way of living, and personal conduct and approach to wellness – moving away from feminist ideology into a space of conservative ideology that inspires women.

### **Brittany Pettibone**

Brittany Pettibone was born in 1992 in California and is described on her website as a writer and conservative political activist (brittany-pettibone.com, 2019). Most notably, Pettibone is the author of a non-fiction self-help book for girls, *What Makes us Girls*, and co-author of an award-winning science-fiction and fantasy novel, *Hatred Day* (brittany-pettibone.com, 2019). What Pettibone and Lokteff have in common is their broad viewership on YouTube. Pettibone's YouTube channel has a little over 118,000 subscribers and is a key platform for her transmission of ideas. Unlike Lokteff, Pettibone uses a "vlog" style YouTube video, or video blog. Usually these only contain minor edits and much of the content is the creator's opinions, observations, or personal experience narratives. There are no accompanying graphics, and many of her videos appear to be set in her home. This gives her vlogs an authentic, realistic, and natural flow of discussion. A specific video in which she disseminates her views is "Women are Losing their Femininity" which is co-hosted with her sister in August of 2018 (Pettibone, 2018a). In her video, Pettibone uses the sexual complementarity as an appeal to women viewers by highlighting her own conservative experience, through the performance of digital conservatism, or storytelling as a "cultural intervention" in response to feminism.

The title, "Women Are Losing Their Femininity," signals to viewers that her framework for gender is a binary; she places women and femininity as dependent on each other, just like men and masculinity. Viewers can understand that her claims are personal as she begins the video with an "I" statement: "I find it very insulting that women have to basically abandon their

inherent qualities, their nature, to become more like men, and that is supposed to be empowering?” (Pettibone, 2018a). Pettibone is upfront and clear that she believes feminist discourse is false and to subscribe to feminist ideology is to desert a woman’s natural ability and potential. Pettibone uses digital anti-feminism, as it emphasizes the strict binary between feminism and conservatism. Her set-up of feminism as anti-woman shows *her* viewers that *her white race* supports true womanhood. True womanhood is defined by the rules of the *white race* and that appears to be in direct conflict with the definition supplied by feminism. Therefore, promoting *white race* womanhood and denouncing feminist womanhood, Pettibone creates space for conservative women to feel empowered. This is a perfect instance of digital conservatism, that encourages an alternative out of Pettibone’s narration.

Pettibone compliments this binary structure when she says that “they [liberals/feminists] completely overlook how noble and honorable it is for a woman to be a mother” (Pettibone, 2018a). This quotation uses language that we see in the writings of Kathleen Blee’s analysis of the Klu Klux Klan’s position, showing motherhood as an honorable position and mission. Additionally, white supremacist movements rest on a foundation sexual complimentary, which is enforced through motherhood. Therefore, the appeal to the individual woman is purposeful, and empowered through motherhood and the ideals of domesticity, that come with the attachment of the *white race* advancement. This means Pettibone emphasizes maternity in a similar fashion to earlier notions of women in extreme right-wing movements. However, she relies on digital anti-feminism to perform digital conservatism and on the sexual complimentary to prove that the older images of conservative mothers are sustainable.

Pettibone uses “you” statements in her YouTube video to directly speak to her audience. For example, “You don’t have the opportunity to showcase these qualities that come more

naturally to you, like empathy, like compassion, and kindness...” (Pettibone, 2018a). Her attention to her female audience is specific to their well-being and natural image. Although Pettibone does not explicitly reference motherhood as the place where women can embrace their natural qualities but as seen in the previous quotation and her history, I speculate that Pettibone advocates for motherhood as the most authentic career for women. To embrace a woman’s full potential is to use her natural and inherent qualities that she was given at birth. Pettibone relies on the “proof” of biology that sex and gender expression are the *same* things, and to denounce feminist ideas about a *distinction* between sex and gender, that show Pettibone’s claim to be inseparably anti-feminist. As repeated with respect to my prior analysis of literature of extreme right-wing women, Andrea Dworkin sums up the lure of motherhood and domesticity and the nuclear family with her images of a fixed system, or determined belief system, that is offered and enforced by the extreme Alt-Right. Sexual complementarity informs the structure that Dworkin identifies because it shows the gender binary as equal and sustainable.

In Pettibone’s speech “Defenders of Europe Conference in Austria,” from her YouTube channel, her appeals to the sexual complementarity are evident. Pettibone uses “I” statements and personal experience narrative to espouse *white race* ideology about motherhood and work. Despite the fact that at the time of this video, March 2018, Pettibone was unmarried and without child, she signals to an idyllic future as a wife and mother (Pettibone, 2018b): “While I obviously still fight for my country and for my family and for myself – what’s most important is the knowledge that I will likely be a wife and a mother one day in the not-too-distant future” (Pettibone, 2018b). Her statement reinforces the desired roles of wife and mother for conservative women. Furthermore, she suggests that none of her work matters if she does not contribute to population, education, and domesticity. As an appeal to women, Pettibone’s claims

show her audience that motherhood is an expectation, but that motherhood is also the place where women will find their purpose. An individual purpose gives empowerment, a sense of independence, and a sense of worthiness. This is a persuasive line of thinking as it maintains its defense of traditional qualities in womanhood, heterosexuality, and the nuclear family, through the speech of a conservative woman. Pettibone's YouTube channel, as well as Lokteff's, both engage deeply in digital conservatism.

### **Lauren Southern**

Lauren Southern is a Canadian far-right political activist, YouTube celebrity, and documentary film director. Southern has been described as Alt-Right, although she has not confirmed this description. Like Lokteff and Pettibone, Southern uses her YouTube channel as a medium for her conservative messages; she has just under 700,000 subscribers (Southern, 2019). The content I analyze is a recorded-video posted to Southern's YouTube channel from her May 25, 2017, Cal Poly speech. Southern is a lively speaker, and thus she approaches her appeals to individual conservative women through the clarity of her speech and ideas. Although rehearsed and pre-written, Southern is passionate in her explanation of anti-feminist values and the pro-conservative reality.

Southern has a large online audience, in fact, this video alone has 353,000 views. She uses the appeal to the sexual complimentary just as Pettibone and Lokteff have done in their respective channels and speeches. For example, implementing "digital anti-feminism" and "digital conservatism" and creating advice-driven narratives. As previously mentioned, digital conservatism is a response to digital feminism, that uses storytelling as a discursive tool of cultural intervention on the internet (Jackson, Bailey, Welles 2019). Southern focuses in on the college campus life-style of a "hook-up" culture, or culture of casual sexual encounters (Wax

2017), and the impacts that women will endure through their participation. Southern advocates for marriage and abstinence when she says, “if a woman has zero sexual partners before she gets married, she has a 90% chance at having a successful marriage later on” (Southern, 2017). I view this quotation through the lens of an appeal to sexual complementarity, but also through the lens of accurate factual representation. Southern did not acknowledge where she received the “90%” number and gives no examples of women and marriages that were “successful” through her message of cause and effect. The insertion of the false statistic allows Southern to use fear to show that a woman who has had a sexual partner or partners before marriage, will be less likely to have a successful marriage. Furthermore, how she defines a successful marriage may not be fully understood to the average audience. However, to a conservative or extreme right-wing audience, it is clear that a pure and chaste woman makes for the best wife. Additionally, the placement of the “90%” statistic is a performance of anti-feminism. Since performed via a digital media outlet, Southern performs digital anti-feminism – turning her words into practiced action. Southern performs digital conservatism by offering a remedy to the statistic and setting up an appeal that has culture-wide and society-wide implications and repercussions. As an appeal, Southern uses happiness in a marriage to show that women should abide by the guidelines of conservatism, especially in their early years at college, to secure a husband. Additionally, Southern plays into the marriage plot that appears in the messages of Pettibone and Lokteff. In doing so, she appeals to an individual conservative woman’s desire for purpose and achievement, which starts with marriage.

Southern continues with the appeal to sexual complementarity through ideas about biology and nature. She claims, “biologically we are not as well built as men for the types of shallow transactional relationships required for state craft” (Southern, 2017). The structure of her



claim places the roles of men and women in contention with each other. In reinforcing the sexual complementarity, and using a negative description of public facing jobs, women are to understand that their “natural” duties will suit them best. Their natural duties are for a life of domesticity, which is in connection to her previous claim above about women, marriage, and success. Furthermore, using the term “biologically,” it appears as though Southern has referenced scientific data to support her claim, thus making her words sound credible, and her image trustworthy, despite the falsity of her assertion. This only bolsters Southern’s credibility as a spokeswoman for the Alt-Right. As an appeal to women, hearing a young, attractive, and credible woman demand rights for the female population in the *white race* is encouraging, especially as it is delivered through the framework of downplaying the work of men. The assumption, thereafter, is that the work of women would not include “transactional relationships” and “statecraft.” Southern’s use of language to address her audience’s appeals to women is important because no woman wants to be considered shallow, or transactional. This terminology alludes to the fallen woman and prostitution, not the ideals for pure white womanhood. Therefore, this tactic of separating the roles, jobs, and qualities of men and women sets Southern up to advise conservative women on how to avoid their downfall should they be lured by the public sphere.

In a similar conviction, Southern continues to allude to women’s nature and biology as a strength that conservative women possess. The structure of her claims is based on the foundation of sexual complementarity and highlighting women’s role as honorable. She asserts that “women tend to be valuable based on their fertility, beauty, and youth, and men tend to be valued on how much money they make and how successful they are” (Southern, 2017). Southern’s quotation appeals to individual conservative women because she marks their qualities as “natural”, and

men's qualities as having to be obtained or learned. However, fertility, beauty, and youth are all qualities of women that are temporal. This means that, by a certain age it is not biologically possible for a woman to carry a child to birth, and beauty and youth have to be acquired from outside sources. However, Southern's audience is a college campus, so she pleads to the group to understand the value of their worth in the current moment, and to make the best of it to leave their mark on society through the intents of a conservative woman.

### **Conclusion**

Scholarship from Blee, Dworkin and Schreiber follow the representation, tactics, and experiences of women in extreme right-wing movements that are specifically associated with the *white race*. Organizations such as the WKKK, the CWA, the IWF, and, of course, the "new Alt-Right" are central parts of their writing. The inclusion and focus of women in extreme right-wing movements in their scholarship forces the reader to understand and view women as important players in *white race* movements. That means establishing how Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber identify the appeals to women members. Through an overall framework of anti-feminism, appeals to individual women in the *white race* were primarily concerned with a religious and traditional aesthetic, appeals to sexual complementarity, and socialization and comradery. Although separate, these appeals work together to form a comprehensive image of benefits to womanhood in the *white race*.

Socialization and comradery as an appeal to conservative women has roots in the beginning of time. Community forming, being a part of a group, acceptance and admission are central to human beings as "social" beings. Therefore, it only makes sense that to appeal to new members, the benefits of friendship, family, and human attachment are imperative. Without it, it would be challenging to create or identify purpose and goals within the individual, if there is no

community to translate it. Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern use socialization and community building as an appeal to the individual woman as a tool of empowerment to reinforce their status as women Alt-Right leaders. The same can be said for the older scholarship that understands that for women, in particular, relationships and comradery will drive membership into extreme right-wing organizations. Specifically, Kathleen Blee gains this insight from her individual interviews with former and current extreme right-wing women: to understand a desire for human relationships may come *before* subscription to *white race* ideology and informs scholars about the persuasiveness of human connection. This is important to identify as a key component to *white race* women because it makes clear that common ideology, goals, ethnic backgrounds, political backgrounds, and gender are compelling images.

Protection and preservation of an aesthetic of whiteness is an important appeal to conservative women. This language appeals to women of any generation because it appears to be based on their benefit. Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber talk about this in terms of a white aesthetic. Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern do this as well because it reinforces the ideal image so that any conflicting representation will be scrutinized, and the original image will be enforced. As many of the appeals to conservative women show, response to the “other” allow extreme right-wing organizations, movements, and spokeswomen to promote and defend their ideology as the best alternative to the “mainstream” beliefs and culture.

Sexual complementarity is pervasive in both past and present scholarship on women in extreme right-wing movements. As an appeal, sexual complementarity preserves a belief system and familial structure that separates the roles and responsibilities of men and women. Spokeswomen such as Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern point to favorable attributes in a woman’s role to encourage sexual complementarity. The Alt-Right spokeswomen’s rhetoric is

consistent with the scholarship of Blee, Dworkin and Schreiber, who identify motherhood as the distinct appeal to women. Each author identifies that by playing into the gender binary and the traditional roles of women as domestic beings in the private sphere, maternity is viewed as honorable. Conservative women can find comfort in knowing that their purpose in life as mothers is already a part of their natural and biological functions. Establishing sexual complementarity as an appeal means defining and interpreting patriarchal guidelines in a framework of separate but dependent spheres. This is significant because a binary-promoting framework is persuasive in the ways in which such a framework benefits white men at the expense of women.

However, the case studies on Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern show that although Christian faith has consistently been an element of extreme right-wing movements, the Alt-Right focus does not seem to base appeals to women on religion. None of the women explicitly include a relationship with Jesus Christ or a Christian God as a benefit for joining. Instead, it appears each spokeswoman pulls from and relies on the ideals and teachings of Christianity as the foundation of their appeals. As functions of Christianity, an aesthetic of whiteness and appeal to the sexual complimentary operate because of the ingrained belief in a Christian God already. It is implicit or inherent, that women who seek out membership in extreme right-wing movements may already have a connection to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern *add on* to narratives such as the marriage plot, or reproduction and domesticity. In doing so, they are updating the “right” to focus instead on a profound sense of anti-feminism that is accomplished most successfully outside of the church -- not without the church, but in a setting that is accessible to a wider audience rather than a grass-roots community organization.

The absence of religion is a significant difference between the functions and recruitment tactics that extreme right-wing movements and spokeswomen employed then and now. In *Rise of the Alt-Right* Thomas J. Main points out that the “new right’s” increase in intellectual and rhetorical sophistication actually diverges from earlier Klu Klux Klan and neo-Nazi organizations (Main 2018, 7). Additionally, Main claims that the Alt-Right is “the first new philosophical competitor in the West to democratic liberalism” (Main 2018, 18). His comments are interesting to consider when thinking about a shift from right-wing Christian-focused organizations, into an ideology or entirely new thought process or way of living. In this way, theory and identity are central to the Alt-Right, which can be seen in Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern. There are higher rates of female education in the United States than there was during the entire span of the 1900s which potentially contributes to the distance between the Alt-Right and explicit Christian values.

A critical factor in the shift from older scholarship on extreme right-wing women to the present discourse and activity is the mode of transmission. Advances in technology such as the internet, social media, and instant online sharing allow women like Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern to disseminate their ideas more widely. YouTube is a *free* video-sharing website that anyone can access. The search bar function on YouTube is itself an open door to viewership of any content from any place in the world. Due to high-speed internet and unlimited sharing possibilities, 2019 Alt-Right spokeswomen can reach more “diverse” audiences with the hopes of altering their ideology in their favor. The ubiquitous presence of the internet and advances in technology allow the *white race* to also advance. Online public platforms such as YouTube allow content creators to *know* their viewers. Each channel can view their audiences, gender, age range, and traffic source or the way their audience came to interact with their channel (YouTube 2019).

Conversely, women in organizations such as the WKKK would be unable to communicate to mass audiences or recruit with immediate conversation and response.

There are not many prominent spokeswomen in older extreme right-wing movements. In fact, many of the Grand Wizards or leaders of racist organizations were and are men. However, with the advances in technology and the normalization of video-sharing and posting, Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern are internet “celebrities”. Their faces are becoming synonymous the Alt-Right and their sites are gaining clicks. They normalize the spread of *white race* discourse, as a subject that females have purpose telling and whose experiences attract empathy and membership. Furthermore, students in 2019 are considered “digital natives”. A digital native can be defined as a someone who has grown up with new technology and are “native speakers” of the inter-web (Prensky 2001, 3). This is significant because it means young people are approaching problems based on the research found on the internet and, when learning, they prefer to see graphics over text (Prensky 2001, 3). Thus, Lokteff, Pettibone, and Southern create content that the current and future generations will understand and can view as many times as they want. Their YouTube videos reinforce, repeat, and reproduce content for subscriber’s immediate satisfaction.

I conclude that my analysis suggests we can gain considerable insight into the dimensions of the present Alt-Right from scholarship of past extreme right-wing movements in the United States. The most significant contrast and distinction between the historical and current knowledge of the Alt-Right is the separation of religious commitment. Blee, Dworkin, and Schreiber’s analyses show the Alt-Right as offering appeals about religion, a *white race* aesthetic, *white race* member friendships, and sexual complementarity. Their research, interviews, and observations are essential to understand the dynamics of the current Alt-Right

because they show what past organizations valued in their female members. Spokeswomen Lana Lokteff, Brittany Pettibone, and Lauren Southern abide by the success of these earlier appeals, but have a greater focus on anti-feminism, digital conservatism, and mass audiences. Their specific appeals include sexual complementarity, a *white race* aesthetic, and the benefit of female friendships. Identifying and documenting present-day appeals to women in extreme Alt-Right movements mean researchers recognize the relevant and influential experiences of *white race* women.

Future research on women in the Alt-Right should further study how and why religion is of a lesser importance in the belief system of the *white race*. From my own research and the research of scholars like Thomas J. Main, it is clear there is less concern about the presence and practice of religion in the Alt Right. Additionally, it would benefit researchers to study how higher levels of education in women impact membership and participation in extreme Alt-Right movements. What is the role of education in attracting women in the Alt-Right today versus the early formations of organizations such as the Klu Klux Klan or Nazi's? To understand these ideological and movement shifts, is to understand more about the roles and involvement of conservative women.

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